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LIBERTY CONSULTANTS CITE EDISON'S
TREE TRIMMING PRACTICES, LACK OF
MANPOWER, IN POWER OUTAGES

The Liberty Consulting Group, which is examining Commonwealth Edison Company's electrical distribution and transmission systems following several major power outages in 1999, today released its second report. The ICC hired Liberty Consulting to review the Commonwealth Edison transmission and distribution systems, as well as the company's standards, policies, procedures and practices at the time of and prior to Edison's 1999 power outages.

Liberty's second report found that, among other shortcomings, the utility's tree trimming programs were inadequate, poorly planned and understaffed. The report states that many of the interruptions of electric service experienced by Commonwealth Edison's customers were caused by trees contacting the utility's distribution facilities and that funding for tree trimming was inadequate; management oversight and tracking of tree trimming progress, inadequate; and tree trimming standards insufficient to assure distribution system reliability. Liberty also concluded that Commonwealth Edison had failed to adopt a recommendation for increased tree trimming from a 1992 audit conducted by Resource Management International for the ICC.

The Liberty consultants' conclusion was that while the utility may have had generally good standards, procedures and people to carry them out, its electrical system failed because the company had not spent nearly enough money on maintenance and necessary system improvements in prior years. Liberty found that Commonwealth Edison set its distribution and transmission staffing levels without reasonable plans or studies regarding the work necessary to assure reliable service. In 1991, the company expected staffing levels to increase during the early and middle 1990s, but staffing during those years, instead, dropped.

Liberty also determined that Commonwealth Edison did not perform the level of distribution system construction, after 1992, that would have been consistent with the age of the utility's equipment and the growth of electric load on the system.

The Liberty consultants added nine new recommendations in their second report to the 59 recommendations contained in their first report. The nine new recommendations say that Commonwealth Edison should:

- develop and implement a comprehensive manpower planning program;
- develop a formal management succession plan;
- evaluate the positions within its organization that have high or low spans of control;
- formalize its tree trimming standards;
- ensure adequate annual funding of their vegetative management program;
- take a more aggressive approach to tree trimming management;
- make a special report on tree trimming each year to the ICC;
- increase its distribution construction to a level necessary to keep up with the distribution conditions and load growth; and
- make several enhancements to its construction management practices.

In its first report to the Commission, released in early June, Liberty evaluated Commonwealth Edison's electric distribution system. This second report concludes Liberty's investigation of the distribution system. Meanwhile, Liberty is well into its investigation of the transmission system and will provide two reports covering the transmission system to the Commission later this year. Both of the completed Liberty Consulting reports are posted on the ICC Internet web site, **<http://www.icc.state.il.us>**. Printed copies are also available from the Commission.

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